

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, July 9, 1883, with transcript

Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. L Washington, July 9th, 1883. My dear little wifie:

If I take care of myself here — remember your promise to take good care of yourself too — and of the babies! I called upon poor Mr. Johnson this morning and he was very anxious to see me. Poor fellow he is terribly changed — and although his symptoms are more favorable than they have been — his appearance speaks volumes. Hollow eyes — with purple rings — a pinched face and trembling voice. He longs for the sea-side and fresh sea-breezes and told me he thought he would “go in about two weeks”. I wonder where he will be then! He does not look to me as if he could last so long. He surely must have some idea of his condition for he sent yesterday for the Rev. Mr. Elliott and had the Communion Service read to him and partook of Communion; and yet he told Mr. Elliott that he believed he would get well. Would it not be a miracle if he recovered? I don't think that any one has any hope for him. I shall try to see Dr. Johnson tonight so as to ascertain his real condition and whether it would be possible to move him since he longs for the sea — but I fear the answer.

His brother has been quite ill for the last few days and has only been able to attend his office to-day. To add to his anxiety he has been sub-poenned as a witness in some case or other and is liable to arrest and I don't know what for unintentional contempt of Court. He was summoned a week ago but his brother's condition made him forget all about it and he failed to put in an appearance. Now he has received a peremptory summons to attend in Court — and he has gone today 2 in fear and trembling. The moment I have finished this letter I am going round to see how he has fared and if the Court insists upon

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his evidence just now (as they may do from his non-appearance last time) — I shall see what I can do to get him off by getting the doctors to sign a pretty strongly worded excuse.

Miss Pierson has presented her accounts and vouches for inspection and also an abstract of the totals for each month from the time she came to us up to the present. The average amount she has expended on housekeeping amount has been \$527.24 per month!

This shows she has saved us a good deal more than she has cost us and is altogether gratifying. I have not examined the accounts sufficiently yet to know whether there have been bills for groceries, etc., that have been settled by us independently of her.

I am making up a box to send to you by Express — containing washing — hammock — lawn-tennis set — books — express wagon for Elsie and wheel barrow for Daisy.

I will see if I can find anything else of use before closing it. I am afraid to send the bows and arrows for fear you might be tempted to shoot — but if you think you would like them I will forward them with a new target.

I don't know where the Punch and Judy dolls are but if I can find them perhaps Maurice or somebody can give the babies a Punch and Judy show.

What do you say to my giving one of the monkeys a few days airing in Oakland. Jill is very tame and would be no trouble. I 3 could bring her up with me next Sunday and wouldn't the baby-world go wild over her!

Miss Pierson leaves tomorrow night, and Mary Horne and the cook will then keep house for me. Mr. Moxley, Mr. Tainter or the Doctor will sleep in the house while I am away.

I enclose a note received from Mr. Lunt of Canada which will show you I have the prospected of another pupil for my little school! — and a note from Mrs. Obie — which makes me think I am on the track of a teacher. I have asked Mrs. Obie to set me in communication with Miss Siedel. I can easily find out by correspondence whether she is

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well educated and what sort of work she did with the deaf boy in her school. It may turn out that she is well educated — has had experience in teaching ordinary children — also experience in teaching articulation and lip-reading to the deaf boy — without the bias to some particular system that would come from experience gained in an Institution. In this case there can be little doubt that we could offer her a salary that would induce her to enter upon the work of teaching articulation to the deaf — for which she must be naturally fitted — if — if — she has done what Mrs. Obie believes she has done.

Should correspondence seem to indicate she is the person we want — I think it would be worth my while to go to see the boy she has taught — and at the same time take a look at her and her school. Then if everything is O. K. make her an offer. Of course my hope may turn out ill-founded — but it is worth while making inquiries about her and entering into correspondence with her — that is if my 4 little wifie does not object to my taking so much interest in “a very well-bred young lady” — perhaps pretty! — “of German parentage” — no she can't be for I haven't seen a pretty German lady yet.

What shall I tell Lewis? What cause do you assign for wanting to get rid of him? Would it not be better “to request his resignation” as they do in the army — so as to give him “an honourable discharge”? I won't say anything to him until I hear from you.

With much love, Your affectionate husband, Alec. Mrs. A. Graham Bell, Oakland Hotel, Md. P. S. I remember seeing Mrs. Lunt's little boy when I went to Canada to attend Mrs. Ottaway's funeral. He was a fine bright little fellow about four years old — or less — but did not speak — or at least said only a few words. I found his dumbness was on account of partial deafness — and encouraged his parents to try to teach him to speak. I told them that I believed that his speech would improve and his hearing also to such an extent that I believed he would ultimately be simply “hard-of-hearing” like Mr. Chas. S. Johnson. AGB. P. S. Mr. Didden has just gone. The estimates amount to \$12,685. I shall consult Charlie before deciding anything. AGB.